RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 6th August, 1992/15 Sravana, 1914 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock.

The Deputy Chairman in the Chair.

REFERENCE TO THE FORTY-SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DROPPING OF ATOM BOMB ON HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI AND OBITUARY REFERENCE

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I have to refer to the holocaust that shook humankind the world over forty-seven years ago. The dreaded 'ATOM BOMB' was dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan on the 6th and 9th August, 1945, during the Second World War, killing and maiming lakhs of innocent people and leaving behind a trail of suffering, misery and destruction. It was wanton cruelty perpetrated by man against man. We pray such tragic incidents will never be repeated. We also hope that efforts to make the world free of nuclear weapons succeed so that humankind is never threatened by such catastrophes.

Hon. Members, we mourn also the passing away of a stalwart of our struggle for freedom, Shri Achyut Patwardhan, a thinker, Gandhian, Socialist Revolutionary of the first order, who galvanised the people to the mass action and for the Quit India Movement. He underwent repeated spells of imprisonment. A distinguished selfless activist, Shri Patwardhan, devoted his whole life for building the dignity of India and new India.

I would request Members to rise in their places and observe silence as a mark of respect to the memory of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki tragedy and also in the memory of passing away of Shri Achyut Patwardhan and pray for the well-being of all those who are still suffering from the aftermath of the holocaust and the missing of our leader.

(Hon. Members then stood in silence for one minute.)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Unemployment Insurance Scheme for Industrial Workers

*421. SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representation from trade unions and labour organisations to create an unemployment insurance scheme for the industrial workers; and

(b) if so, what action Government have taken thereon?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR): (a) A suggestion from the Social Security Association of India, New Delhi about unemployment insurance scheme for the industrial workers was received by the Government on 6-7-1992.

(b) The government is examining the suggestion.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Madam, we are all aware of this Government's new economic and industrial policies. These policies will naturally result in contraction of the industrial base of this country and we are all also aware of the Government's policy of open-door to multinationals, foreign investment and other investments from abroad... *(Interruptions)*...I am not discussing. This is the fall-out of... *(Interruptions)*... You please hear me. You are not the Minister. Anyhow, the Minister is here.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let him ask. Then we can always find out what he said.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Madam, the Minister is waiting... *(Interruptions)*... Anyway, we will recommend your case. The fall-out of these new industrial and economic policies will result

in contraction of indigenous industrial base and reduction of labour force. This has been the experience of many third world countries where the IMF and World Bank's economic structural readjustment programme has been initiated. Apart from this, there is tremendous industrial sickness in the private sector also. We have been discussing in this House, a number of times, the magnitude of the industrial sickness in the private industry and in most of the cases, this sickness is due to these economic policies and also due to the banking policies initiated by this Government. Most of the units are now becoming sick and in Andhra Pradesh. To quote an example, out of 3,000 small-scale industries, nearly 2,000 are about to be closed or about to become sick.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, what is your question, please? (*Interruptions*)...Please put your question.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANBHAM: I am coming to the question. Therefore, I would like to know from the Minister whether he has made any survey as to the number of people who will be thrown out of the industries, who will be thrown out of their employment and if he had made a survey, if his Ministry had made any survey, I would like to know from the Minister whether he can give any definite figure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF MINISTER OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A. SANGMA): Madam, it will be too early to give any definite figure. The House is aware that the Government has constituted a special Tripartite Committee to look into the effects of the new industrial policy on labour and this Committee, in turn, constituted six other Industrial Committees and the possibility of revival of all he public sector units is being examined now, started now, at the Union level and unless those reports come, it will be difficult for me to give any definite, specific number or figure.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: About the private sector...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Second supplementary please...

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: I mentioned the private sector in my first supplementary, Madam.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: This is second supplementary.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: The Committee is at the moment devoting its time studying the public sector. We have not started studying the private sector.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Madam, my second supplementary is that there are now three Acts which are relevant to protect the rights of the industrial workers and for their welfare. These are:

(1) Employees' Provident Fund Act;

(2) Employees' State Insurance Act; and

(3) Payment of Gratuity Act.

Apart from other minor Acts, these three Acts are the major Acts which will protect the interest of the industrial workers. These Acts will not cover any of those employees who have been thrown out of their jobs because of the new industrial policy or the new economic policy or because of the sickness in industries. I would, therefore, like to know from the honourable Minister whether he is going to evolve or formulate any comprehensive social security legislation to cover these people.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: O.K.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Madam, besides the three Acts mentioned by the honourable Member,, the most important Act is the Industrial Disputes Act. In the event of closure or in the event of retrenchment, the workers are entitled to benefits under section 25 of the Act. As It stands today, if a worker is retrenched or displaced because of closure, he is entitled to get 15 days' wages for each year of service. Now, this law is being reviewed in line with the Ramanujam Committee Report on the new industrial relations law. The Ramanujam Committee

has suggested that 15 days' wages should be raised to one month's wages for each year of service. It was examined by the Group of Labour Ministers chaired by me. We had three sittings, three meetings of this Group and the Ministers' Committee has recommended 45 days' wages instead of 15 days' wages. Therefore, the law exists even today to protect those workers who may be retrenched or who may lose their jobs because of closure.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, Mrs. Jayanthi Natarajan.

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: Madam, we are all aware that unemployment is going to be one of the biggest problems that we are going to face in the future.

Madam, actually, when Rajivji was the Prime Minister, there was a decline in unemployment to the extent of four million people and there was a phenomenal growth rate, of more than 9.5 per cent in 1988-89. But now the projection is—this is according to the figures that I have been able to get—that in 1992-93, about eight million people are going to be unemployed. So, my question to the honourable Minister is very simple. Even according to the Directive Principles of State Policy, some kind of public assistance in the form of allawance from the State for the unemployed is in order and, in fact, should be encouraged. It is with that in view that the Prime Minister Mr. Narsimha Rao, has also emphasised the importance of the public distribution system. But, as far as unemployment is concerned, my question is very specific. Is the Minister considering unemployment insurance in case of unemployed workers? Is he considering introduction of unemployment insurance? Will it cause any decline in productivity? I am asking this because this will only be curing the symtom. The question is one of greater employment generation and not simple unemployment insurance Is the Minister aware of a proposal in the ILO wherein they concentrate not only on unemployment, but, more importantly, on manpower information service? Madam, there is a specific proposal and just in two sentences I will explain that. They say that the Employment Exchanges can play a vital role... (*Inttrruptions*)...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let him find out.

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: I want to know whether he will find out from them as to how to bridge the communication gap between the employer and the unemployed. They have a proposal whereby the gap between the employer, the job-seeker and the trainer can be bridged by greater exchange of information. The Government itself can give this service through the Universities through guidance bureaus and through the Employment Exchanges. Will the Minister consider this ILO initiative in bridging the communication gap among these three groups so that greater employment can be generated and these gaps are filled?

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Madam, there is no proposal at present to introduce unemployment insurance scheme or unemployment allowance. As of today, if we take the figure of the unemployed with the Employment Exchanges, it is 3.7 crores. Even if we give five rupees per day for each person, then the amount comes to Rs. 5,700 crores per annum and I am not sure how many people are going to accept five rupees per day. This is point number one.

The second is that the moment we introduce unemployment allowance, the number of the unemployed will shoot up.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: How?

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: It is natural because instead of geting money by working people would like to get money without working!

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: For your five rupees? ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: No. That is why I said that nobody would be prepared to accept five rupees.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: It is negligible.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: But your basic calculation is on five rupees per day.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let him answer.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: The solution lies in creating and generating more employment opportunities for our workers. Every single paise that we have must be spent for productive purposes, and people must be provided with gainful employment. These are the two basic policies of the Government, and that is the only way to solve the problem of unemployment. I don't think the problem or unemployment can be solved through unemployment insurance. Therefore, the Eighth Plan document clearly says that generation of employment and achieving near employment by the turn of the century is the main objective of the Eighth Five Year Plan, and precisely because of this reason, more and more allocations are being made to generate employment, follow his question.

SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Since the effort has been to close industries nowadays which has created unemployment throughout the country, some specific skilled labour and workers are also unemployed. In this situation, I want to know whether the Government is thinking to establish employment exchanges for such skilled labour to reemploy them in particular industries or mills where such skill is utilised.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: I could not follow his question.

SHRI GOPALSING G. SOLANKI: I want to know whether the Government plans to introduce an employment exchange at the Central level to register particularly the skilled labour so that the same skill is utilised in some of the other industries or mills.

SHRI P. A. SAGMA: Madam, the Centre has no proposal to have an employment exchange at the Central level. The employment exchanges are run by the respective State Governments. And in the employment exchanges of the State Governments, the people are registered category-wise graduates and above matriculates and above, below matriculates, and skilled and unskilled—and everything is done.

SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: I am talking of skilled only.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: It is maintained separately in the employment exchanges.

SHRI PRAGADA KOTAIAH: Madam, there is no security of service to the rural workers employed in their traditional industries, and they are being displaced from day to day on account of competition from their mechanised counterparts. Now, the Minister says that instead of introducing insurance for the unemployed persons, we have to provide employment to them or generate employment for them. What are the steps being taken to ensure employment for those already engaged in their traditional occupation?

AN HON. MEMBER: Specially handloom.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Specially handloom. He says that mechanisation has thrown out many people out of jobs. What are you thinking of that? I think, that is the gist of the quesion.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Mechanisation, in my view, must have thrown out some of the people from employment. I don't have the details because this a subject dealt with by the Ministry of Rural Development, and I do not have the figures.

SHRI PRAGADA KOTAIAH: He is not giving a direct answer. He has stated categorically here that the Government will take steps to ensure employment to them instead of covering them under unemployment insurance. People who are

engaged in their traditional occupations are being displaced nowadays on accounts of competition from their mechanised counterparts. What is the proposal that the Government has to ensure their employment?

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Madam, the hon. Member is referring to the firshermen...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Not fishermen.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: I think, I have adequately answered it. (*interruptions*) I know his problem. We have adequately answered it day before yesterday that we are, for the first time, introducing a Centrally-sponsored scheme for the fishermen which was not there-on 50:50 basis—the Central Government will give 50 per cent and the State Government will give 50 per cent. We are also...

SHRI PRAGADA KOTAIAH: General problem.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: ...as a result of mechanisation...

AN HON. MEMBER: It is a general question.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: He means that. I know it very well. I have been discusing his problem very often. And we have also introduced a subsidy scheme for the fishermen...

SHRI PRAGADA KOTAIAH: What about handlooms?

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: ...to the tune of Rs. 10,000 which is again equally shared by the State and the Centre. As far as the handloom weavers' problem is concerned...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Actually, Mr. Kotaiah is basically involved with handloom. He must have temporarily taken up the cause of fishermen.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: I have invited the hon. Member for a thorough discussion on this specific problem. I have invited the hon. Member for a fresh discussion on this specific problem.

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: The main thrust of the question is whether the Labour Department has received from the trade unions and labour organisations a representation to formulate Unemployment Insurance Scheme for the industrial workers to which the Minister said, no. He also said that the Ministry has formed a tripartite committee and that committee again has formed six sub-committees. While answering a question he also said that unemployment is the main problem. So my question to the hon. Minister is, what are the terms of reference of this tripartite committee and also what is the time frame for it? I would also like to know, considering the huge number of unemployed persons, and if we take Mrs. Jayanthi Natarajan's figure, it is 8 million people who will be unemployed by the end of this year, what the Government plans to do to provide employment to these people, and whether the Government has any plan to bring up a Central legislation as Employment Guarantee Act. I have these two questions to ask.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: I did not say 'no' to the question. In fact, the main answer says that we have received suggestions from the Social Security Association of India on the 6th of last month. I could not react much to it because it is exactly one month since we received it. We are examining the suggestions. That is what I have answered. I did not say 'no'.

As far as the second part of the question is concerned, whether there will be a Central legislation for employment guarantee scheme, I mentioned on the floor or the House the other day that Planning Commission have already written to the respective State Governments suggesting that on he lines of Maharashtra, the State Governments may consider enacting a legislation for employment guarantee scheme.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: She asked for Unemployment Insuarance Scheme.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think she is capable of asking her own question and she does not need anybody's support.

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: My question was very specific, whether the Central Government plans to bring out a Central legislation to be called Employment Guarantee Act, and not the employment guarantee scheme on Maharashtra pattern.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: No, Madam.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: Just now the Minister said that it is not possible to have employment insurance because of the problem of resources. I have visited so many public sector undertakings. They have vast chunks of land for development but those lands are not being made use of. I want to know whether the Government would consider to allow sale of those lands which are in urban areas. The prices of these lands have gone up to such an extent that I think with these resources we will be able to give them finance for purposes of modernisation. If that is done, I feel that there will not be any problem of closure and sufficient employment can be generated. I want to know whether the Government will consider it. The Executives Association of IISCO yesterday said that the worth of assets is only Rs. 380 crores. But that is their estimate; they may be wrong. But the present value of assets is Rs. 16,000 crores. I want to know whether the Government will conduct a survey of such industries and wherever excess land is there and you can get a good rice by selling that land, whether the Government will consider my suggestion to mobilise resources.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: These lands are governed by the State legislations like Urban Ceiling Act, Municipality Act, Corporation Act. Practically we do not have power over this. Normally the State Governments do not give permission to dispose of those lands. I quite agree that this could be one way of mobilising resources for the public sector or for any other purpose that Government may think. This has been taken up by the Ministry of Urban Development and Department of Public Sector Enterprises with the respective State Governments.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Next question.

Foreign Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan

*422. SHRI ANANT RAM JAISWAL:†
DR. ABRAR AHMED:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Foreign Secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan are to be held at New Delhi in the middle of August, 1992 and the date of the meeting was finalised by the Prime Minister when he met Pakistani Prime Minister in Rio de Janeiro last month;

(b) whether Government propose to raise the issues of growing militant activities in Jammu and Kashmir and suppiy of arms to the militants during the talks;

(c) whether Government would also discuss ban on production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) At their meeting at Rio de Janeiro on 14 June, 1992, the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan had agree that the bilateral dialogue should be resumed. The dates for the next round of Foreign Secretary level talks were to be decided through diplomatic channels. These talks are now scheduled to be held in New Delhi from 16 to 19 August, 1992.

(b) to (d) There is no fixed agenda for these talks. They are expected to cover the entire gamut of bilateral relations.

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† The question was actually asked on the floor of the Huse by Shri Anant Ram Jaiswal.